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General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

70th plenary meeting
Monday, 27 November 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Lamamra (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda items 20 and 154

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/203-E/1995/79 and Add.1)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/50/286-E/1995/113, A/50/292-E/1995/115, A/50/301, A/50/311, A/50/423, A/50/424, A/50/447, A/50/455, A/50/464, A/50/506, A/50/522, A/50/534, A/50/541 and Add.1, A/50/654 and A/50/763)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/50/743)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.27, A/50/L.29, A/50/L.30, A/50/L.31, A/50/L.32)

(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/418)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.26)

Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development

Note by the Secretariat (A/50/542)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.23).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In connection with agenda item 20 and its sub-items, the Assembly, to date, has the following draft resolutions before it: under sub-item (b), five draft resolutions: A/50/L.27, "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia"; A/50/L.29, "International assistance to and cooperation with the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America"; A/50/L.30, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of El Salvador"; A/50/31, "International assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola"; A/50/L.32, "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)".

95-86804 (E)

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Under sub-item (c), the Assembly has before it draft resolution A/50/L.26, "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster".

In connection with agenda item 154, the Assembly has before it draft resolution A/50/L.23.

I should like to remind members that, as announced at this morning's meeting, the Assembly is deferring to a later date, to be announced, its consideration of two aspects of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, namely, those concerning the special emergency assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of Burundi, and international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia; as well as sub-item (d) of agenda item 20, concerning emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan.

I now call upon the representative of Argentina to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.23.

Mr. Cárdenas (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I once again have the honour of introducing to the General Assembly a draft resolution — draft resolution A/50/L.23, co-sponsored by 64 countries — Finland, India and Suriname having added their names to the list of co-sponsors. The draft resolution is designed to promote the participation of "White Helmets" in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development.

In October 1993 the President of Argentina, Mr. Carlos Menem, suggested to the international community an innovative idea which contained the following elements: First, rapid-deployment teams of trained, multidisciplinary professionals would be established to assist in cases of disasters or emergencies and to serve during the transition between the end of the emergency and cooperative activities concerning rehabilitation for development. Secondly, such teams, composed of volunteers, would become a part of the United Nations system through the United Nations Volunteers programme, coordinated by the Department of Humanitarian Assistance. The creation of such a mechanism would lead to the creation of new arrangements to facilitate the involvement of the developing countries in this kind of United Nations activities. Lastly, non-traditional sources of financing from the private sector would be involved, thereby making it possible to enhance the United Nations response potential in the area of rehabilitation for development.

This idea, championed and supported by many delegations at the highest level, led to the adoption in December 1994, at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, of resolution 49/139 B, also known as the "White Helmets" initiative. That resolution marked the beginning of a process designed to establish the appropriate institutional framework for using the "White Helmets" within the social and economic machinery of the United Nations.

In this connection I should like to emphasize the important role played by the United Nations Volunteers in developing the initiative and making it operational. I should here like to express our gratitude to the Volunteers after a year of concerted effort.

Once it was adopted, the initiative translated the normative mandate into practical action, demonstrating the added value of the notion of using "White Helmets" in United Nations activities in this field. The high level of political support the initiative enjoyed, both during the General Assembly session and at the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, was reflected and reiterated in the replies received by the Secretary-General from Member States, agencies and non-governmental organizations. We are convinced that the impetus it has thereby been given will make it possible for the initiative to maintain its momentum and develop along the lines originally envisaged.

One of the great challenges we faced was to develop an appropriate institutional framework to channel and properly use "White Helmets" in the context of United Nations activities in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance.

We believe that the Secretary-General's report and the Note by the Secretariat give a clear description of the appropriate pattern of the necessary functional interaction, both between the United Nations agencies involved and between the United Nations and Governments that would make "White Helmets" available to the system. At the same time, we would like to emphasize the importance to the successful operation of the "White Helmets" initiative of establishing fluid and flexible communications and cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

Since the initiative was introduced, Argentina has felt it vital to draw upon specific field experience, and, with this aim in mind, we have carried out a number of missions designed to identify operations and urgent needs that would justify the implementation of pilot projects involving "White Helmets".

As indicated in the note of the Secretary-General, specific rehabilitation projects for development have been carried out in Haiti and Armenia, and it is expected that three similar projects will shortly be implemented in Gaza, Angola and Jamaica.

One of the most critical factors for the success of this initiative is, without question, the provision of adequate financial resources for its implementation, as well as for developing countries to be able to participate in this machinery if they decide to establish their own corps of volunteers. Mindful of this fact, the General Assembly, in the context of the Special Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Volunteers, established a distinct window for financing the "White Helmets".

Argentina, in accordance with its earlier announcement, has made its first contribution to this window, and we welcome the fact that other countries as well, such as Germany, have already contributed to this distinct window for the "White Helmets". We have no doubt that this is the beginning of a positive experience, and we hope that other countries will follow suit.

We believe that what we have said clearly demonstrates the validity, from the political, institutional, operational and financial standpoints, of the "White Helmets" initiative. For this reason we believe that, through this draft resolution, we can close out the phase initiated by resolution 49/139 B, which introduced the "White Helmets" initiative and tried to give it content and form through specific projects.

In conclusion, I should like to inform the Assembly that in the course of the many consultations held since September this draft resolution has already received consensus support from interested countries. We therefore propose, on behalf of the 64 sponsors, that this draft resolution be considered by the General Assembly for adoption by consensus.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of Guatemala, who will introduce draft resolution A/50/L.29.

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of six countries of Central America: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Guatemala.

For more than 20 years, the United Nations has been striving to mobilize special economic assistance to benefit countries that, as a result of adverse factors such as internal armed conflict, are facing situations that jeopardize their economic viability, while at the same time their needs for assistance may exceed the capacities of a single agency or programme. In such cases, the General Assembly has urged Member States to step up their financial, material and technical assistance to the beneficiary countries.

The countries on whose behalf I have the honour to speak have benefited substantially from the kind of assistance to which I have just referred. The General Assembly, reaffirming its conviction that peace and development are inseparable and voicing its concern about the emergency situation in Central America, responded, on the request of the Central American countries, to the commitments established in the agreement on "Procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America". It stressed the need to adopt agreements that would make it possible to speed up development in order to achieve more egalitarian and poverty-free societies. The General Assembly urged the international community to increase assistance to Central American countries and also appealed to the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate in executing the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America. The objective of the Plan was to promote international cooperation in support of peace through development, and specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as international organizations outside the system, together with the donor community, both bilateral and multilateral, participated in the implementation of the Plan. Contributions amounting to $1 billion were mobilized.

Once the mandate of the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America came to an end, on 31 December 1994, international cooperation activities began in support of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America.

As noted in one of the two resolutions that the General Assembly adopted last year on assistance to Central America, the conclusion of the Special Plan

marks the transition from humanitarian aid to Central America to emergency cooperation in establishing and executing programmes of sustainable human development. In this new phase, as noted last year by the Secretary-General in his report to the General Assembly on assistance to Central America, it is appropriate to continue execution of the programmes and projects drawn up in the framework of the Special Plan and in the process of the International Conference on Central American Refugees.

The efforts designed to promote development in the region must be pursued in conformity with the principles of the Alliance for Sustainable Development. Agreeing on the need to pursue an integrated development strategy suited to the region, in keeping with the realities of the region, responding to the requirements of the new trend in international relations and assuming present and future responsibility for and in support of its citizens' access to a better quality of life, the Central American Presidents endorsed in October 1994 the Alliance for Sustainable Development. Its objectives are to make the isthmus a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development through the promotion of a change in personal and social attitudes, which would bring about the construction of a model of sustainable development in the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental fields in the framework of Agenda 21; to achieve integrated sustainable management of land in order to ensure conservation of the biodiversity of the region for our benefit and for that of mankind as a whole; and to promote conditions that will permanently strengthen the capacity and participation of society in improving present and future quality of life.

This integrated Central American initiative is one of national and regional development in the political, moral, economic, social and ecological fields, involving policies, programmes and actions in the short-, medium- and long-term. It is designed to bring about a change in the pattern of development of the countries of the region, a change in the way of life and attitudes towards life, both personal and social, and a change in policies and specific actions for the sustainability of our societies.

This reality involves challenges, requires creativity and necessitates the quest for new paths of action. Thus, the Alliance for Sustainable Development finds its proper place in the Central American region and establishes a forum for coordination and harmonization of common interests, development initiatives, responsibilities and rights — all of this based on existing regional institutions that are complemented, supported and strengthened.

Central America wishes to be recognized for its determination and efforts to make sustainable development effective and would like to see complementary support in the requisite fields.

At the Summit Meetings of the Central American Presidents, agreements have been signed that take into account the relationship between peace, development and democracy. Recently, in March 1995, during the Sixteenth Summit Meeting of the Presidents of Central America, in San Salvador, the Treaty on Central American Social Integration was signed.

The delegations of the countries on whose behalf I have the honour of speaking are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report in document A/50/534, and in particular for its description of the activities begun in January in support of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. We are also very grateful to the Secretary-General for having included in his report a summary of developments in the macroeconomic sphere, which is of particular interest to us.

The people of Central America recognize the valuable and effective contribution which the United Nations, the international community and the cooperating countries have made and which has been crucial to our progress in the peace process. We must bear in mind that if the region is to overcome the tremendous economic and social difficulties faced by the majority of its population, Central America require, and will continue to require for some time, economic assistance; the General Assembly stressed the importance of this in resolutions 49/137 and 49/21 I of 19 and 20 December 1994, which emphasize the compelling need to design a new programme for international economic, financial and technical cooperation and assistance for Central America geared to the new circumstances in the region and based on the priorities laid down by the Governments of the region. We are certain that the General Assembly and the international community will recognize this need, which is based on the importance of international support in the transitional period of the peace process.

This is the thrust of the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.29, which I have the honour of introducing. It reflects the support that will continue to be given the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. The peoples of Central America are confident that the assistance granted to Central America by the international community and the United Nations

will be maintained and that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus at the appropriate time.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to propose, with the Assembly's consent, that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 4.30 p.m.

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Vladimirov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The problems of preventing and solving emergency situations of various origins are highly topical today for countries the world over, including the Russian Federation. This is due to the fact that, on the territory of Russia alone, such misfortunes annually lead to the deaths of thousands of people and to material losses amounting to trillions of roubles. In this connection, the Russian Federation warmly supports United Nations initiatives aimed at minimizing the threat of emergency situations and at solving them. Within the framework of such initiatives, we are making considerable efforts internally and at the international level.

In recent years, as a result of measures undertaken in Russia, much has been done to prevent and solve emergency situations. Today, we are able to note that we have managed to stabilize the country's situation in this regard to some extent and that we hope for further progress.

One of the most acute problems we face is that of eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Almost 10 years have passed since the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, a major technological disaster of the twentieth century that affected vast areas and millions of people. Because of its scale, the Chernobyl disaster became a national tragedy for Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. All its consequences have yet to be eliminated.

Today, as a result of an existing State programme of the Russian Federation on the protection of victims of the Chernobyl disaster, it has become possible to solve in whole or in part a number of major scientific-technical and production problems. In this connection, I refer to the monitoring of contaminated territories, the mapping of radionuclide contamination density on our territory, and the study of virtually the entire territory of the Russian Federation that could possibly have been affected by the disaster.

The questions of deactivating inhabited localities and territories have been resolved. Agricultural technologies have been designed and introduced to allow high-quality harvests to be reaped. Much work has been done on reducing radiation contamination among the people. Nearly 2 million square metres of housing have been built since the accident. Considerable progress has also been achieved in victims' medical services.

In this way, the implementation of the State programme has allowed us seriously to mitigate the effects of the disaster, although the situation in the affected territories of Russia today is far from satisfactory, as correctly noted in the Secretary-General's report on this question. Thus, nearly 100,000 people remain exposed to levels of excess radiation over 1 mSv a year. In four inhabited areas, average levels of excess radiation exceed 5 mSv a year. The difficult economic situation in the countries affected has increased the consumption of home-grown produce, mushrooms and berries, and levels of excess internal radiation are therefore on the increase.

One obvious result of radiation poisoning today is the increase in thyroid cancer noted among children and teenagers today. There are currently 55 such cases in Russia, which is 30 times higher than the world-wide average. So far, we have noted no obvious increase in cases of leukemia, tumours or genetic disturbances in the populace, but that does not mean that they may not occur in the near future.

In this connection, we are continuing at the State level to formulate plans to minimize the consequences of the accident at Chernobyl — improving living standards, increasing medical services and implementing special measures to lower radiation levels in the population — with a view to removing limitations on peoples' lives and activities in the contaminated regions.

It should be noted that the international community was shaken by the disaster at Chernobyl and that it has extended and continues to extend considerable assistance to the three States most affected: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

We greatly appreciate the results of our cooperation with the Commission of the European Communities, the

World Health Organization, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other international and national organizations. The joint projects now under way have already yielded important scientific results, which we must follow up and implement in practice, in the interests of all mankind. We are convinced that the complex of post-Chernobyl problems can be successfully solved only on the basis of global international cooperation.

Together with Belarus and Ukraine, we have sponsored draft resolution A/50/L.26 entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster" under agenda item 20 (c). We call on Member States to support the draft resolution.

For our part, we are ready to do everything possible to ensure that international contacts and connections in this field become even more effective and grow deeper and wider, and that the experience of liquidating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster becomes available to humanity as a whole. The experience of international cooperation on the Chernobyl problem enables us to express our views on a number of other problems concerned with preventing and eliminating emergency situations resulting from different causes.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to United Nations activities in the field of extending emergency humanitarian assistance and considers it to be one of the Organization's most topical and promising tasks.

The Secretary-General's report on these problems confirms the need for the world community to take additional measures aimed at satisfying the growing needs for such assistance.

To our way of thinking, the close integration of peacemaking, political, humanitarian and economic aspects in the growing number of humanitarian crises requires the strengthening of working relationships and interaction within the United Nations Secretariat, and also between the United Nations and other international organizations.

We support the idea of developing a comprehensive strategy for overcoming humanitarian crises — a kind of "Agenda for humanitarian action". It would also be desirable to work out a new concept for the solution of the problems of refugees, which would give pride of place to preventive measures in controlling the sources that provoke mass migrations of people and the creation of a comprehensive system of early warning of humanitarian crises.

Non-traditional approaches should be actively used to resolve the problem of lack of resources for the financing of emergency humanitarian operations, including collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions and mobilizing the resources of private corporations and the possibilities of regional and non-governmental organizations.

The Russian Federation believes that pursuing the debate on the Assembly's draft resolution on the "White Helmets" deserves serious attention. Provided that participation is voluntary and States take joint responsibility for the project, the idea of White Helmets could, we believe, be further developed even at the current Assembly.

We would like to stress that Russia is not only participating in measures to provide international humanitarian assistance, but it is also contributing to the dissemination of the experience existing in the world.

Thus a number of major international seminars on the elimination of emergency situations have taken place in the Russian Federation at which new mechanisms for notification and counter-measures in emergency situations of technical origin with consequences across national frontiers have been worked out. The studies revealed a number of problems requiring subsequent solution. This is linked primarily to the absence of a clear international treaty and legal bases, procedures and documents regulating the actions and powers of the relevant international institutions and also national organizations, for securing a timely and effective reaction to emergency situations of a natural and technical origin. Problems of inter-departmental coordination at the national and international level as regards the notification of accidents must also be addressed.

The Russian delegation is grateful to the world community for providing emergency assistance to populations who have suffered as a result of natural disasters in our country and also in neighbouring regions. We would like to express the hope that if the need arises, such support will also be extended in the future.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: I now call on the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.27.

Mr. Jele (South Africa): In its capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of November, the South African delegation is pleased to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.27 entitled "Assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia".

Since the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the African Group, has in successive sessions, joined in sponsoring a draft resolution calling for economic, relief and other assistance for Liberia since the eruption of the civil conflict in December 1989. As in previous years, this year's draft resolution has been updated to reflect the current progress and developments in the peace process.

In the preamble to the draft, the Assembly recalls its previous resolutions as well as Security Council resolution 1020 of 10 November 1995, in which, *inter alia*, it called upon all the Liberian parties to respect and implement fully and expeditiously all the agreements and commitments they had entered into, in particular with regard to the maintenance of the cease-fire, disarmament and demobilization of combatants, and national reconciliation, as the restoration of peace and democracy in Liberia is primarily the responsibility of those who signed the Abuja Agreement on 19 August 1995.

The draft resolution expresses concern about the lack of logistics and security guarantees which continue to impair the delivery of relief assistance, particularly in the areas not yet under the control of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and notes the urgent need to restore peace and stability to enable the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic sectors of the country. It recognizes the recent progress made by the Liberian parties towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict, including the re-establishment of a cease-fire, the installation of a new Council of State on 1 September 1995 and the agreement reached on a timetable for the implementation of the peace process from the cease-fire to the holding of executive and legislative elections. It commends the concerted and determined efforts of the Economic Community to restore peace, security and stability in Liberia.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the Assembly expresses gratitude to the States, the international community and governmental and non-governmental organizations for their response to appeals by the Government of Liberia and by the Secretary-General and requests that such assistance be continued. It also expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to mobilize relief and rehabilitation assistance for Liberia, including the convening of a pledging conference on assistance to Liberia in New York on 27 October 1995, and in this regard encourages States that pledged assistance to fulfil their commitments.

The Assembly calls upon States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide Liberia with technical, financial and other assistance to enable it to meet its rehabilitation and development objectives. It emphasizes the urgent need for all parties and factions in Liberia to respect fully the security and safety of all personnel of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and ECOMOG.

It requests the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize all possible assistance within the United Nations system to help the Government of Liberia in its reconstruction and development efforts, and to undertake, when conditions permit, in close collaboration with the authorities of Liberia, an overall assessment of needs, with the objective of holding a round-table conference of donors for the reconstruction and development of Liberia.

The Secretary-General is also requested to report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the draft resolution. The Assembly further decides to include in the provisional agenda of the fifty-first session an item on the question of international assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia.

As Liberia emerges from war, it will need the empathy and support of the international community in order to achieve its rehabilitation, reconstruction and development goals. I therefore request that this draft resolution be adopted unanimously.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of El Salvador to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.30.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First of all, we wish to place on record our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/455) entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of El Salvador", submitted pursuant to resolution 49/21 J. It gives a detailed account of the economic and social developments in El Salvador in the post-armed-conflict period, and in particular of the economic situation in 1994 and the progress in, obstacles to and prospects for the

reconstruction process and the strengthening of democratization in El Salvador.

El Salvador experienced one of the most severe, complex and difficult crises in Central America in the second half of this century — in the 1980s, to be precise, when a military and political conflict began and went on for 12 years. As the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the conflict resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, while thousands more became refugees and displaced persons and the country's economic and social infrastructure was destroyed, at an estimated cost of more than $1.6 billion.

However, the tragedy experienced by the people of El Salvador, despite its doleful consequences, must be considered from an optimistic point of view. The peace agreements of 16 January 1992, which put an end to the armed conflict, including the agreement on human rights signed in San José in July 1990, provided the framework for transforming El Salvador from a nation of violence and social injustice into a society dedicated to peace-building, democratization and the promotion of national reconciliation, reconstruction and people-centred economic and social development.

In the nearly four years that have elapsed since the signing of the peace agreements, various reports published by the United Nations — issued by the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL), the Commission on Human Rights, the independent expert and the Secretary-General — and resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council have reflected the political and economic progress made in the Salvadoran process.

Noteworthy in the political sphere is the promulgation of a new political Constitution guaranteeing the pre-eminence of civil power over military power; the country's ongoing demilitarization process; the demobilization of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and its integration into civil society; the replacement of the public security forces by the new National Civil Police; the reform of the electoral system; and the creation and strengthening of mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights.

In the economic sphere, the implementation of the emergency and national reconstruction programme has given way to the creation of medium- and long-term programmes aimed at promoting wide democratic participation and eradicating the structural causes of the conflict, mainly social inequalities and extreme poverty.

As Member States are aware, external support was an indispensable complement to the efforts of the Government of El Salvador in fulfilling its commitments in order to develop the structural adjustment and stabilization programme, initiated in 1989, and the new programmes established in the post-armed-conflict period relating to the emergency plan, the implementation of the Peace Accords and national reconstruction.

In the context of the reconstruction process, programmes relating to energy, water supply, transportation, housing, telecommunications, education, health and agriculture had significant financial implications. Considering that in 1993 the Government, owing to the country's financial and economic problems, was not able on its own to cover such costs, doubts arose as to the ability of El Salvador's economy to bear such a burden. The two processes — structural adjustment and programmes to consolidate peace — should have been complementary, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, but in practice this was not the case.

In this respect, it should be noted that in May 1993, the Secretary-General stated that

> "The successful conclusion of this peace process can be achieved only if the necessary financing is forthcoming ... two of the programmes — those relating to land and the new police force — do not at present have an adequate basis of financial support. Yet they are central to the Peace Accords and their failure or curtailment could threaten all that has been achieved." *(S/25812, para. 113)*

In September of the same year, he stated:

> "The international community must provide the financial resources necessary to consolidate and conclude this extraordinary experiment and this example of peace, reconciliation, reconstruction and development". *(A/48/310, para. 67)*

We note in 1995 that although progress has been made in the political, economic and social spheres, there is still a long way to go in areas considered to be priorities in the consolidation of peace and sustainable development in El Salvador. We have almost brought to term the commitments of the Peace Accords, and we reaffirm our resolve to fulfil them, since, as the

Secretary-General indicated in the aforementioned report, the delay in their implementation has been due primarily to financial limitations. These include, especially, the dwindling, since 1994, of resources provided through donations to support the consolidation of peace.

It is important to highlight that despite the existing resolve and the political will to fulfil outstanding commitments and consolidate the process, the Secretary-General has noted that in El Salvador

> "Technical and financial cooperation is still needed from the international community, however, failing which there is little likelihood of consolidation of economic growth, reconstruction, improved living conditions for the poorest sectors of the population, peace, democracy and the functioning of democratic institutions". *(A/50/455, para. 33)*

El Salvador is exorcising the spectre of fear, hatred and the sufferings of war and welcoming the dawn of hope and the certainty of reconstruction, democratization and equitable economic and social development. But progress towards and consolidation of these lofty aims are at a complex stage that requires special efforts to ensure their viability and sustainability.

Allow me to refer to draft resolution A/50/L.30, "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of El Salvador", which was originally sponsored by Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador.

The spirit of the draft resolution derives from three major goals of the Government of El Salvador relating to the consolidation of peace in the post-conflict period: to consolidate the fulfilment of the Peace Accords, including aspects relating to democratic institutions; to continue the national reconstruction plan; and to increase the efficiency and scope of the economic and social development plan. These plans and programmes focus on providing a new approach that goes beyond that of short-term programmes and on developing long-term strategies that include the operation and consolidation of the new democratic institutions and the implementation of programmes and projects for productive reintegration and reconstruction, in accordance with the provisions of the economic and social development plan.

With respect to the fulfilment of the remaining commitments under the Peace Accords, it is vital to continue to support efforts to complete the implementation of programmes relating to land transfer and the reintegration of former combatants, demobilized personnel and landholders, as well as to strengthen the new National Civil Police, democratic institutions and the organs of the electoral system, which require technical and economic support in order to guarantee their development.

The national reconstruction plan and the economic and social development plan are based primarily based on sustainable human development through medium- and long-term programmes targeting the population affected by the conflict and the most vulnerable sectors of society in order to improve the quality of life and social mobility by improving the systems of education, of health, of housing and of creating sustainable employment.

We hope that the General Assembly will adopt draft resolution A/50/L.30 by consensus, and that it will also reach a consensus on understanding the need for the solidarity and support of the international community so that the peace process in El Salvador may be successful.

In this context, we wish to reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General, to the Four Friends of the Secretary-General for the peace process in El Salvador — Colombia, Spain, Mexico and Venezuela — as well as to the United States, to the United Nations system — in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization — and to all other cooperators for their invaluable support for the process of consolidating peace in El Salvador.

In conclusion, I wish to cite some words taken from a Salvadoran newspaper, words written by a Salvadoran poet and member of the former national negotiating Committee in the Salvadoran peace process, Mr. David Escobar Galindo. He writes that the three keys that will open the locks that kept the Salvadoran people imprisoned within their own fear during the last decade come in the form of three guarantees: the guarantee of method, the guarantee of content and the guarantee of subject:

> "The method is democracy; the content is development and the subject is civil society. If we guarantee that the method functions with wisdom, that the content is favourable for all Salvadorans and that the subject ceases to be the silent onlooker and

becomes the protagonist of the story, then we will be able to jangle the keys."

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: I now call on the representative of Bulgaria, who will introduce draft resolution A/50/L.32.

Mr. Raichev (Bulgaria): In addressing the cluster of issues under agenda item 20, my delegation would like to focus particularly on the issue of economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

First of all, allow me to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 49/21 A of 2 December 1994 and for his useful and insightful report (A/50/423) presented to the Assembly at this session. It is our view that, together with the other relevant documents on this subject — in particular the Secretary-General's report (A/50/60) entitled "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", and his report (A/50/361) on the implementation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations related to assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter — it provides a good basis for thorough consideration and for taking appropriate steps on this highly important issue.

The complex problems related to the Yugoslav crisis have been a matter of primary concern for the United Nations in recent years. The implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) has been regarded as an important, peaceful tool of the international community for bringing about a negotiated settlement of the crisis. The Republic of Bulgaria, together with the other affected third countries, has complied strictly with these resolutions.

The conclusion of the General Framework Agreement for Peace, reached on 21 November 1995 in Dayton, is a historic event which opens up a realistic possibility of putting an end to a long and destructive conflict and achieving peace in the region. The Dayton accords made it possible for the Security Council to adopt resolutions 1021 (1995) and 1022 (1995) of 22 November 1995, by which it sets up the process of post-conflict peace-building, lasting stabilization and recovery for the whole region. The suspension and subsequent termination of the sanctions imposed by the Security Council are an important element in this process. The Republic of Bulgaria welcomes these developments and is looking forward to the genuine implementation of the Dayton agreements.

At the same time, the special economic problems of the affected States, which have incurred considerable losses as a result of the strict implementation of the sanctions, still remain unresolved. It must be recognized that the accumulated problems continue to pose serious difficulties for the economic and social development of these countries and that if they are not addressed in a suitable and timely manner, they will continue to affect adversely their economies. The issue of finding an appropriate response to these problems by the international community should therefore now be moved to the forefront.

In illustration of the gravity of the problem, allow me briefly to draw the Assembly's attention to my country, which ranks among the States carrying the heaviest burden of losses due to the strict implementation of the sanctions. According to the recent estimates of the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Cooperation of the Republic of Bulgaria, the total amount of losses calculated for the period July 1992 to July 1995, using United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) methodology, was $8.5 billion. Industrial production, where the losses exceeded $3.034 billion, was the most seriously affected sector of the national economy. Direct losses due to the suspension of imports from and exports to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the re-routing, stopping or delaying of commercial traffic to and from Central and Western Europe exceeded $2.244 billion for the period 1992-1994, equivalent to 22 per cent of the gross national product for 1994 alone. The long-term effect on the national balance of payments accounts is estimated at around $1.117 billion in direct losses. Combined with the losses already incurred by the Bulgarian economy as a result of the sanctions against Iraq and Libya, the effect of the Yugoslav sanctions poses serious obstacles to the overall economic stabilization of the country, not only in the short and medium term, but also in the long-term perspective.

In recognition of the severity of the economic problems of the States affected by the Yugoslav sanctions, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 48/210 and 49/21 A. As a whole, these resolutions have proved instrumental in mobilizing the efforts of the international community aimed at addressing some of the difficulties experienced by the affected States.

I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the international financial institutions, other international organizations and States which responded to the Secretary-General's appeal to take the special economic problems of the affected countries into account in their support programmes. The issue has also received the continued attention of intergovernmental and regional organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union, as well as through the Central European Initiative. The OSCE seminar on the role of trans-European infrastructure for stability and cooperation in the Black Sea region, held in Sofia from 15 to 17 November 1995, provided a constructive contribution to this process by recognizing that a more active approach needs to be taken by the international community in resolving the pressing infrastructure problems that have evolved in South-Eastern Europe.

We expect that the outcome of the seminar will contribute to the efforts of the international community for overall stabilization of the region through intensification of the cooperation between the countries of the area and their further integration into European structures. A considerable step forward in this direction will be the active participation of the countries affected by the sanctions in the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of the crisis-stricken areas of the former Yugoslavia.

Unfortunately, despite the general recognition of the mounting difficulties of the affected States and of the need to share the economic burden imposed on them, the practical measures undertaken so far are still far from adequate. In the light of the urgency of the need to find timely and effective approaches for addressing the issue, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine came forward with a set of specific proposals in a joint letter to the Secretary-General of 18 May 1995, circulated as an official United Nations document (A/50/189). Moreover, a number of useful recommendations and observations involving the need for a concerted effort by the international financial and economic institutions, the agencies and organs of the United Nations system and individual donor countries have been formulated by the Secretary-General in the reports to which I have referred.

Reaffirming the urgent need for a concerted response from the international community to deal in a more effective manner with the special economic problems of the affected States, I would like to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.32, entitled "Economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of the Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)". The following Member States have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

The main thrust of the draft resolution is to renew the appeal for support from the international community and the relevant United Nations organs, programmes and specialized agencies, including the international financial institutions, and to continue the mandate of the Secretary-General to monitor and provide the necessary impetus to the implementation of the process, as appropriate. The draft resolution also envisages a number of specific practical measures to mitigate the negative impact of the sanctions on the affected States through support for their financial stabilization, the development of regional transport and communications infrastructure, the promotion of trade, and active involvement in the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of the region.

We are hopeful that the draft resolution will receive the unanimous support of the membership and will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call next on the representative of Portugal to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.31.

Mr. Freire (Portugal): Under agenda item 20 (b), Portugal is pleased to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.31, entitled "International assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola", which we, among other countries, have sponsored. I take this opportunity to announce that Australia and France have joined the list of sponsors.

Portugal has been involved in the peace process for Angola since [illegible] later as one of the observer States, together with United States of America and the Russian Federation. In recent months, this peace process has seen some positive

developments, and today the prospects for peace in Angola are more encouraging than ever.

It is time for national reconciliation for all Angolans. In this context, it is very important not to lose the momentum for peace, and it is essential that the international community provide assistance to help achieve the economic rehabilitation of Angola, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/424).

We are encouraged by the positive signals shown at the Round-Table Conference of Donors organized by the United Nations Development Programme, which took place at Brussels last September.

It is in this spirit that the present draft resolution is introduced for the consideration of Member States. On behalf of the sponsors, I would like to express my sincere hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola): Allow me at the outset once again to convey to the President of the General Assembly my delegation's appreciation for the way in which he has been conducting our proceedings.

In addressing agenda item 20 (b), I should like to congratulate the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/50/424. It clearly describes the current economic and social situation of Angola, which has been seriously affected by war, as well as the international community's contribution to assist the Government and the people of Angola. The international community's willingness to help Angola in its efforts at economic recovery has been repeatedly expressed in various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

My Government is very thankful for this commitment of the international community and, in particular, for the humanitarian assistance rendered to Angola, which has contributed to alleviating the suffering of thousands of persons in need. However, we realize that humanitarian assistance alone will not solve all the problems. Further measures of economic stability are needed as preventive action.

The one-year-old Peace Accord, the so-called Lusaka Protocol, brought about the necessary conditions for the country to begin its economic reconstruction in peace and to overcome the tragic consequences of about three decades of destructive and bloody war. I would recall that the war has destroyed the country's productive fabric. More than 80 per cent of the social and economic infrastructure has been damaged or completely destroyed. In addition, the war has caused about 3.5 million people to be internally displaced and has created thousands of refugees.

The tasks we face ahead are tremendous. The country's infrastructures have to be rebuilt. Conditions must be created urgently to resettle the displaced persons and refugees. These conditions include the de-mining of the country and the creation of jobs, as well as food and sanitary assistance. Moreover, we still have to meet the needs of about 90 thousand soldiers that will soon be demobilized under the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol.

My Government is doing its utmost to alleviate the heavy burden of the war so that, in the short term, the living conditions of the populations will be much improved. In this context, important resources are being allocated for social areas and to developing basic productive activities. Furthermore, we have embarked on a process of structural adjustment and economic stabilization programmes with a view to rehabilitating all areas of national activity. On the other hand, negotiations are being undertaken with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and donor countries to solve the problem of Angola's external debt.

Last September, a round-table donor conference on Angola sponsored by the Government of Angola and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and with the support of the European Union, took place in Brussels. The goal of the conference was to mobilize financial resources to implement the community rehabilitation and national reconciliation programme. That programme, to be implemented within the next two years, constitutes the main basis of concrete action for the creation of adequate conditions for economic stabilization, national reconstruction and economic and social development. The overwhelming support obtained at the round-table conference from the donor countries and financial institutions demonstrates the confidence the international community has in the success of the programme and in the process of pacification and national reconciliation in Angola.

We look forward to seeing the fulfilment of the commitments made in Brussels by the donor countries so that Angola can proceed with its programme of economic recovery and overcome its social, economic and financial crisis. The full implementation of the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol by the Angolans will surely create the political climate for the implementation of the programme

and for the achievement of sustainable development in all fields.

Let me conclude by availing myself of this opportunity to thank all countries and international organizations that did not hesitate to provide to the Angolan people the necessary economic and humanitarian support.

Mr. Abdelhamid (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like, at the outset, to extend the appreciation of the Government of Sudan to the United Nations for its continued provision of emergency assistance to the needy. This assistance, we all agree, is in conformity with the noble objectives of the United Nations. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/50/464 of 22 September 1995. I take this opportunity to commend the tremendous efforts that continue to be deployed by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to ensure the continuance of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). Sudan has demonstrated its commitment to the objectives of that operation and has reiterated that it focuses on ensuring the arrival of relief to the affected citizens despite the impediments created by the rebels.

Sudan's position on the question of providing food and humanitarian assistance stems from its adherence to the principles and values of Islam which urge the provision of food to the needy in order to preserve their human dignity. Islam has entrenched the principle of interdependence in society, by making it the duty of the well-to-do to assist the needy and by prohibiting the use of food as a weapon against opponents. Those were the guiding principles which prompted Sudan's stance on Operation Lifeline Sudan. The exemplary cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations system and the international community has made the OLS unique in that the Government of Sudan operates cross-line barges, trains, trucks and convoys to carry food and relief supplies to all the needy including those located in areas controlled by the rebels who are waging war against the country.

There cannot be any doubt that Sudan has spared no effort in ensuring the smooth operation and success of OLS. In addition to its actual participation as food donor to OLS, Sudan has continued to provide undeniable facilities that ensure the continuance and success of OLS. Sudan has worked side by side with the United Nations in carrying out surveys to identify and assess the needs of the affected citizens. Those survey missions were conducted quite efficiently. In the same context of cooperation, similar surveys were carried out in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on cereal production.

Sudan's multidimensional cooperation with the international community as represented by the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations in ensuring the flow of humanitarian assistance has been the subject of special appreciation by the United Nations as demonstrated in General Assembly resolutions and in the Secretary-General's report which underscores the success of OLS in assisting all the needy. The references in paragraphs 15 and 16, and 90 of the concluding observations of the Secretary-General's report attest to the fact that OLS has undergone considerable development since it was launched in 1989.

This affirms the earnestness of the support extended by the Government of Sudan to the operation. It was that support that transformed the operation from a short-term programme into a much broader one that now embraces such activities as family food security, water and sanitation, basic shelter and nutrition in exchange for work in the agricultural sector, the reactivation of the health sector, the provision of emergency education, capacity-building and other areas of activity.

Moreover, paragraph 91 of the report indicates that the number of locations which the OLS now reaches number 104. When the operation was first launched in 1989, the OLS activities reached 8 locations only. Consequently, there has been a tremendous increase in the numbers of those served by the operation following the expansion of its activities.

The Government of Sudan has also intensified its efforts in rescuing those who suffered displacement in the Nubian mountains due to the rebellion. It has built a number of "peace villages", which, according to the report, accommodate more than 100,000 displaced persons at present. This has enabled the United Nations to conduct a number of survey and assessment missions for the first time in several years. Despite the fact that the area is not included in the scope of OLS activities, it is now an area that enjoys complete stability.

In November 1995, ambassadors and other diplomats accredited to Sudan visited the peace villages and the Nubian mountains. They witnessed at first hand the extent of peace, stability and coexistence enjoyed by the inhabitants of the area — a situation that refutes the unfounded allegations levelled by the enemies of Sudan.

In its efforts to help those citizens who fell victim to the war imposed on the country, the Government of Sudan has not confined itself to OLS activities. It responded positively to the initiative of the former United States President, Mr. Jimmy Carter, aimed at providing help to people who suffer from river blindness and the Guinea worm, and, in so doing, unilaterally declared a two-month cease-fire, from late March 1995, which it later extended to the end of June 1995.

In addition to the humanitarian effects of the four-month cease-fire, the cease-fire enabled the United Nations agencies to step up the programmes of health care and the immunization of children.

The earnestness of the Government's endeavour to achieve peace from within has elicited a positive response on the part of our citizens. Among the indicators of such response is the continuous movement of tens of thousands of civilians and military personnel from the rebel-held areas to areas recaptured by the Government, where people have been able to resume peacefully their economic and social activities, in safety and stability, to the extent of being able to produce their own food at a level that may have brought them to the threshold of self-sufficiency as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

As I indicated earlier, Sudan has spared no effort in promoting its cooperation with the United Nations and the international community with the aim of creating an atmosphere conducive to success, without prejudice to its security requirements in seeking to achieve the ultimate humanitarian goal of peace. I must mention here the important role the Humanitarian Aid Commission has continued to play in facilitating the work of more than 50 international non-governmental organizations that are now active in Sudan, in the areas of agriculture, health, education and relief, through the prompt provision of the necessary travel permits, visas and customs-duty exemptions.

In recognition of the important work of these non-governmental organizations, the Government of Sudan has recently amalgamated the agencies dealing with OLS. Accordingly, in mid-November 1995, the President of the Republic issued a decree merging the Commission for Voluntary Organizations with the Relief and Habilitation Commission, in order to ensure coordination and efficiency. The idea was to have a unified authority that could coordinate decision-making and ensure smoothness in humanitarian activities.

Nothing more effectively demonstrates the keenness of the Sudanese Government's desire to see the OLS continuing to fulfil its mandate than its acceptance of the nomination of His Excellency Ambassador Ataul Karim to lead the team that is to review the operation. We take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Karim and wish him success. He and Ambassador Traxler visited Khartoum from 19 to 25 November 1995. This visit provided a good opportunity for reiteration of our commitment to OLS and of the need to review the operation. In particular, we want the review to contribute to confidence-building, to remove any deficiencies in performance and to reiterate the principles of neutrality, transparency and accountability, as well as efficiency and effectiveness. Indeed, this visit was a good opportunity to deal with difficulties that surfaced as a result of the prolongation and expansion of the operation, taking into account the emerging requests for humanitarian assistance in other parts of the world and the fatigue that has begun to be noticed on the part of donors.

All these factors have led to a situation that requires a review of OLS so that the existing disposable resources may be put to optimum use. As delegations know, there have been numerous developments since the last review took place. The most important of such developments is the Government's recapture of many locations from the rebels, who are now confined to a narrow border strip. This development has led to the return of large numbers of our citizens to the Government-controlled areas. This, of course, necessitates the reallocation of relief supplies to take account of the numbers and locations of the women and children who are affected.

The Government of Sudan has proposed to the review team that it include the following requirements in its terms of reference: that the size and allocation of the United Nations budget for OLS be made public; that a population count be conducted in rebel-held areas to ascertain the number of people benefiting from OLS emergency assistance, as the OLS stipulates that it was designed to serve the civilian women and children affected by the war, and not the combatants; and that the impact of the numerous reported and well-documented violations of OLS on the peace process in Sudan be studied. This will lead to stability and would lead to dispensing with relief and enable the donors to focus on other needy areas.

The visit of Ambassador Ataul Karim afforded Sudan an opportunity to affirm the importance it attaches to Ambassador Karim's active leadership of the review

team, to his direction of the operation, to his supervision of the review study, the drawing up of the report and to his selection of those whom he would entrust with data gathering and analysis.

The report of the Secretary-General, in dealing with certain issues, focused on their negative aspects, such as the unfortunate incidents of abduction of United Nations staff and the misappropriation and looting of relief supplies for purposes other than humanitarian assistance, but failed to identify the real perpetrators of such acts.

The Government of Sudan has gone a long way in its keenness to cooperate with the United Nations. It did everything possible to secure the release of the representative of the Italian organization Comitate Collaborazione Medico, who was working in Pariang, in southern Sudan, and of the representative of the Belgian organization "Médecins sans Frontières", who entered Sudan without a visa. Both abducted representatives were handed over to the United Nations by the Sudanese authorities.

The report also describes as allegations the Sudanese media reports on one of the international non-governmental organizations' violations of OLS principles. This is an unfortunate and unfair description, for the simple reason that these violations — in particular, the violation of the principle of transparency — were committed by more than one non-governmental organization. The management of OLS was duly informed of such violations, and some of them were rectified. However, the adverse effects of others on the transparency of OLS remained.

The circumstances that led to the suspension of clearance for the Hercules C-130 are attributable to the question of transparency, as the Government of Sudan has not been in a position to monitor the flights of that plane.

The Government was not represented at take-off and, in addition, there has been information that the plane transported military equipment. The southern sector is witnessing operations that aim at restoring law and order while the rebellion, with foreign support, engages in major operations in the sector. The fact that the Government is not represented at the base of operation in the sector, while all the other parties are, makes it legitimate to demand transparency through on-site representation of the Government. This is a demand that is backed by the United Nations Charter which stipulates respect for the sovereign rights of States over their territories. We hope that the ongoing review process will ensure such respect and that the grounded C-130 plane will be made to take off from within Sudan's territory or to land in Juppa before continuing its journey to the rebellion area, should it continue to operate from outside.

The principle of transparency and the desired effectiveness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness will not be achieved for OLS unless the international community seriously considers the proposal of the Government of Sudan to shift all relief operations to locations inside the country. Sudan has demonstrated its principled stand of never using food as a weapon against its opponents and its Government has continued to operate barges, trains and truck convoys to carry food and other relief materials to areas controlled by the rebels. We shall continue to allow cross-line relief until peace prevails and the need for emergency relief ceases to exist.

Sudan has consistently provided assistance to refugees despite its well-known economic circumstances. It hosts over one million refugees and provides them with 90 per cent of their needs, while the international community contributes no more than 10 per cent of such needs. Yet we note that the Secretary-General's report stops short of mentioning that fact when enumerating assistance rendered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to those refugees.

The Government of Sudan also has a living experience of cooperation with the international community in assisting the needy and the displaced. Sudan has opened its doors to international volunteer activities save with regard to issues related to our national security. Sudan has gone even further by establishing a competent and effective government agency to deal with questions of displaced persons and to coordinate national and foreign volunteer activities in that field.

We have noted with interest the remarks in the Secretary-General's report on Eritrean refugees. While the report made a point of focusing on readiness by the Eritrean Government to receive the Eritrean refugees and of mentioning that that Government is building the necessary infrastructures for that purpose, it mentions that repatriation has yet to be confirmed by the Sudanese authorities. The UNHCR and the international community are well aware that the Eritrean Government has declared that it is not prepared to receive any but a very limited number of refugees that it wants to repatriate.

The Government of Sudan accords the highest priority to the process of peace from within because it views that as the mainspring of all the humanitarian work and it has spared no effort in working in that direction. The peace process, in the context of federalism, is continuing to gain momentum. It will enable the people to participate in power effectively and will provide them with conditions conducive to normal economic and social activities and normal life. Peace from within enjoys the continuing support of the people, as demonstrated by the increasing number of returnees to their homeland.

In conclusion, we reiterate the complete commitment of the Government of Sudan to the provision of relief to our citizens wherever they may be. From this rostrum we welcome all contributions from the international community, in particular donor countries, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, to assist Sudanese citizens. We hope that those contributions will continue with broader cooperation towards the realization of humanitarian goals. The Government of Sudan remains open to all that may ensure the progress and well-being of the people of the united Sudan.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 20 (a). At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/50/203).

The United Nations has been involved in various ways in the search for a solution to the series of crises that have marked contemporary times. In a rapidly changing world, the Member States of the United Nations have recognized the urgent need to develop ways and means to meet these crises.

With the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 the United Nations was provided with an operational framework for coordinating international action for humanitarian assistance and natural disasters. The resolution serves as a frame of reference which emphasizes, on the one hand, the importance of the guidelines for humanitarian action by the United Nations, mainly the principles of impartiality and neutrality, and, on the other hand, the need to put humanitarian assistance in a development context in order to break the cycle of the dependence of populations on receiving such assistance.

In this regard, an issue of importance to the Group of 77 and China is the need to focus on the sustainability of the impact of humanitarian assistance in the context of the continuum from relief to rehabilitation to development, especially with regard to addressing natural disasters. This is because in many cases natural disasters tend to affect developing countries more harshly because of the already acute shortage of adequate shelter and infrastructure facilities. Absolute poverty and desolation result, or are exacerbated, once the initial crisis is over. The vulnerability of the developing countries to the consequences of natural disasters is thus generally greater than that of the industrialized countries. Hence, the importance of extending the focus of assistance in the relief-to-rehabilitation phase into the development phase of the continuum and avoiding a short-term perspective of immediate relief. This is necessary in order to ensure the effectiveness of such assistance in contributing to and reinforcing the overall development process.

In considering the continuum with respect to systematic breakdowns or "societal implosion", the matter becomes more complicated in the sense that the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in contributing to rebuilding a society decimated by conflict depends on how effectively the underlying political problems of such emergencies have been addressed.

At best, it seems that the approach at this time should be country-specific, as stated in A/50/203. Moreover, we must underscore the importance of distinguishing humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance programmes from political rebuilding. The latter requires political support to address the underlying causes of a crisis. Failure to maintain this distinction runs the risk not only of diluting the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance but also of running foul of the principles of resolution 46/182. In the final analysis, whether for natural or man-made disasters, the provision of humanitarian assistance operating in a vacuum tends to be ineffective.

The Group of 77 and China also attach great importance to the issue of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system. The basic issues pertaining to this subject were recently spelt out in General Assembly resolution 49/139 A and subsequently reinforced by Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. In particular, these include the need to develop and strengthen system-wide coordination, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182, and to improve the capability for quick and coordinated humanitarian responses.

Most important, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and other concerned parties, including

national authorities, need to develop further their cooperation in this field. We thus look forward to the comprehensive and analytical report of the Secretary-General, as called for in the Economic and Social Council resolution, as providing a basis for examining further all aspects of this issue.

The Group of 77 and China also note the various areas or pragmatic themes on which the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has concentrated during the past year, as set out in document A/50/203. All these areas are indeed important, especially with regard to broadening and strengthening the involvement of the relevant entities in humanitarian activities and strengthening support for in-country coordination. We had wished to comment on many of these issues in more detail. However, given the limited time, I will confine my remarks to one of the main tools provided to DHA to promote coordination, namely the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF).

Resolution 49/139 A notes the usefulness of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to the operational agencies, in particular for enhancing their capacity to address promptly the urgent requirements of the initial phase of natural disasters. Further, the need is recognized to maintain an adequate level of resources in CERF, as well to increase its level of resources so that it can respond to new emergencies at any time.

We thus call on donors to increase the amount of their contributions, especially if organizations have difficulty in reimbursing the Fund from their own resources. Nevertheless, there is an essential need for timely replenishment of the Fund, as delays in reimbursements could seriously hamper the Fund's ability to meet emergency-situation requirements. Regular repayment by debtor organizations is also crucial. We therefore call on all agencies for a speedy response in replenishing the Fund.

Another issue with which I am sure Member States are concerned relates to the security and safety of those carrying out humanitarian activities. In this regard, greater attention should be paid by the international community to the threats to personal safety faced by humanitarian workers.

I now wish to address briefly the issue of natural disaster reduction, which is intimately linked to the issue of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance and the operations of CERF. By virtue of resolution 44/236 of 22 December 1989, which proclaimed the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the General Assembly recognized the need for joint international action in order to mitigate, if not to eliminate once and for all, the threat of natural disasters weighing over mankind, by setting up a programme of action for prevention or for risk management. The International Framework of Action contained in the annex to resolution 44/236 has provided the context for international action, particularly humanitarian assistance, for natural disaster reduction. However, we must express concern — concern also reflected in Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/47 B — at the continuing financial limitation with regard to effective support for the International Framework of Action for the Decade, and, in this connection, call upon Member States and all others involved in the Decade to provide adequate financial resources. Nevertheless, we note and commend the work of the bodies comprising the International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, in particular their contribution to the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy.

The Group of 77 and China also consider the issue of early warning, as discussed in paragraph 145 of the Secretary-General's report in document A/50/203 on strengthening coordination of humanitarian assistance, to be particularly essential in the context of combating natural disasters and preventing and mitigating their consequences. As further stated in the Secretary-General's report in document A/50/526, on early warning capacities of the United Nations system, the value of a timely and effective warning system to avert losses and to protect resources is essential, particularly as countries begin to incorporate disaster-reduction policies into their social and economic development plans. Hence, the critical need for the transfer to the developing countries of technologies related to early warning. This need was also reflected in General Assembly resolution 49/22 B, adopted last year. Sufficient knowledge and technical means are available in matters of early warning and prevention to avert the transformation of natural disasters into even greater tragedies. As proposed in the Yokohama Strategy, such knowledge should be made available to developing countries on favourable conditions and as part of technical cooperation.

With regard to non-natural emergencies, however, the issue of early-warning measures will require further examination by Member States in order to ensure that these measures in themselves, and preventive actions that may be contemplated or arise therefrom, are implemented in accordance with the principles stated in resolution 46/182, other relevant General Assembly resolutions and

the provisions of the United Nations Charter. This issue must be considered fully by Governments on its own merits and in relation to other relevant issues.

Finally, the Group of 77 and China look forward to adopting a short resolution on agenda item 20 (a) aimed at advancing consideration of the various issues related to strengthening the coordination and humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including those related to CERF.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): Allow me first to express my delegation's satisfaction with the comprehensive report presented by the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. The report shows that the United Nations system is responding to the challenge of improving mechanisms for coordination.

Effective coordination is important not only in order to facilitate the work of United Nations agencies and Governments: another main objective is to make as many resources as possible swiftly available to those who really need them. It is part of our obligation towards the victims of conflicts and disasters to ensure that available resources are spent as efficiently and effectively as possible. My Government, therefore, welcomes the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to enhance cooperation between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

The need for coordination within countries that receive different forms of humanitarian assistance is obvious. My delegation appreciates the refining and further development of coordination procedures that are taking place, the appointment of humanitarian coordinators being one example. The expanded cooperative arrangement established between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council is a further example of support for in-country coordination, as are similar arrangements involving the Danish Refugee Council and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.

The consolidated appeals help to provide donors with a balanced view of total needs. Norway welcomes the inclusion of appeals for non-governmental organization projects in the consolidated appeals. This provides a more complete overview and clarifies the role of the non-governmental organizations in relief operations. We believe, however, that the process of setting more specific priorities within the appeals can be further strengthened.

The efforts to broaden the donor base must now be intensified. This is important both to obtain a more reasonable international sharing of the burden and to secure additional funding for humanitarian relief.

The safety of relief workers, from the United Nations as well as non-governmental organizations, is a matter of great concern to my Government. Norway urges the United Nations to continue and strengthen its work to secure the safety of relief personnel.

It is important, even in an acute crisis situation, to bear in mind the future need for the rehabilitation and longer-term development of crisis areas. An important element in this respect is the existence of local organizations and institutions. United Nations organizations as well as donor countries should be aware of the importance of cooperation with the local community in strengthening the indigenous capacity to master the crisis and to take active part in the further development of the area in question. Local non-governmental organizations can be constructive partners and should be involved to the extent possible.

Experience in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and other complex emergencies where civilians are subject to violations of human rights and the brutalities of war once again shows the need to emphasize respect for international humanitarian law. Norway looks forward to the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as an important opportunity for the international community to strengthen its global efforts in this field.

Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees will return to their home areas in the former Yugoslavia in the years to come. In this enormous repatriation operation, we need to address the questions of protection and respect for human rights very seriously and thoroughly. The return must take place safely and with dignity. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called for international support in providing a tight protection network. My Government has responded positively to this appeal and will make available a considerable number of protection personnel as well as financial resources for the High Commissioner's operation. An unorganized return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the war-torn parts of former Yugoslavia would be dangerous and might be a serious threat to the Dayton Peace Agreement. All efforts must be made to avoid any such disaster.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): Support for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in its assigned coordination role was reaffirmed by the leaders of the Group of Seven at their meeting in Halifax in June. As the report of the Secretary-General makes clear, the need for effective coordination of humanitarian assistance has never been greater. The number of people affected by complex emergencies has risen dramatically, into the tens of millions. Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and other complex humanitarian emergencies are among the defining images of this first post-cold-war decade. Let me reiterate at the outset Canada's commitment to working with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in its efforts to fulfil its daunting mandate.

Effective coordination requires prioritization. The work plan of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for 1996-1997 is a welcome first step. What remains is a need for still clearer analysis of the Department's core functions and for a clearer delineation of humanitarian responsibilities among United Nations programmes and agencies. We are concerned that the Department's work plan simply groups together existing activities without establishing clear priorities. This failure is surprising in the light of the Department's limited financial resources and given United Nations general budgetary constraints.

Donors have received a large number of funding requests from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs over the past few years. There is a danger that if the Department fails both to establish priorities and to coordinate its appeals, United Nations humanitarian assistance priorities will be determined by donors on an ad hoc basis because of a lack of coordination. The Department's commitment to developing a financial strategy to provide for its long-term viability is welcome and essential if its financial situation is to become more secure. The presentation of an overall budget, including both assessed and extrabudgetary funding needs, would be particularly useful.

(*spoke in English*)

Effective coordination also requires the appropriate tools, and we are pleased that the instruments mandated in General Assembly resolution 46/182 are taking form. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is a particularly important coordination body and we take note of the Secretary-General's acknowledgement that

> "the full potential of the Committee has yet to be realized." (*A/50/203, para. 36*)

In order to facilitate a smooth transition from the emergency to the rehabilitation phases of a crisis, Canada believes that the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions must establish new coordination procedures, supported as necessary by existing resources. We hope that the Secretary-General will consider whether the Standing Committee and its working group and support unit might play a greater role in ensuring the integration of United Nations relief, rehabilitation and development efforts on an ongoing basis.

We welcome the implementation of the agreement reached within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee with regard to the designation of in-country humanitarian coordinators. It is essential that humanitarian coordinators receive the Standing Committee's sustained support if they are to achieve effective inter-agency coordination on the ground.

Canada reiterates its call to the Secretary-General to explore means to improve the analysis and utilization of disaster and conflict-related early warning information, particularly through the High Commissioners for Human Rights and Refugees. This is not a call for more data, but rather for a process by which the information available can be utilized more readily by decision-makers. Early warning is essential if States are to be able to take preventive diplomatic action and thereby obviate the very need for humanitarian assistance. We support the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to develop the United Nations early warning capacity and to identify means of triggering corrective action by the international community upon receipt of such early warning. Our experience in Rwanda demonstrates that there is no alternative to early action if tragedy is to be averted.

In his report, the Secretary-General observes that it is essential

> "to ensure that humanitarian programmes are not used as a substitute for action needed to reverse the dynamics of war and the circumstances which led to armed conflict." (*A/50/203, para. 18*)

We agree that humanitarian relief is no substitute for efforts to address the root causes of humanitarian emergencies or to prevent those emergencies from occurring. In Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs has created a Global Issues Bureau which will place greater emphasis on preventive diplomacy.

Effective humanitarian action remains essential where preventive diplomacy fails. The strengthening of the quick-response capacity of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, with the creation of the Rapid Response Unit and the consolidation of the Compiex Emergency Division, should enhance its ability to lead the United Nations system in responding to humanitarian crises. The Department's efforts in this regard are completely consistent with Canada's advocacy of an enhanced United Nations rapid-reaction capability, a report on which was put before the General Assembly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in September.

The Central Emergency Revolving Fund is integral to the ability of United Nations agencies to respond immediately at the onset of complex emergencies. The Fund is achieving its objectives. However, we would not want to see its mandate enlarged until it is clear that an expanded role could be sustained.

If our long-term efforts in addressing humanitarian emergencies are to have effect, it is imperative that indigenous capacities for coping with humanitarian crises be strengthened. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation that United Nations humanitarian organizations

> "consider the greater use of local NGOs and other indigenous expertise in the planning and execution of relief and rehabilitation". *(ibid., para. 161)*

The development of effective partnerships between United Nations agencies and other humanitarian relief organizations, both public and private, is essential if effective coordination and collaboration in the delivery of humanitarian relief is to be achieved.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has existed for only three years. During this short time, real progress has been achieved in our efforts to strengthen the coordination of the humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance of the United Nations system. Further steps were made this summer during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. The appropriate agencies, organizations, funds and programmes are now reviewing their individual capacities in the areas of humanitarian assistance. This can only help to achieve greater complementarity in emergency response. We look forward to receiving their reports and to the analysis and recommendations to be provided by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We expect this to demonstrate that the United Nations system can, in fact, work in a comprehensive and coordinated manner in addressing the need for preparedness and humanitarian assistance. The end result will be, we believe, many more lives saved.

Mr. Hudyma (Ukraine): First of all, the delegation of Ukraine would like to join in the expressions of gratitude to the Secretary-General for his preparation of reports on the issues under discussion.

The documents placed at our disposal testify to the considerable work accomplished in perfecting United Nations activities in providing humanitarian assistance. In our opinion, the activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which has managed to achieve positive results in improving cooperation and strengthening coordination between United Nations bodies in this field, also deserve appreciation.

In providing humanitarian assistance and special economic assistance, we must take into consideration two mutually reinforcing factors: one is the abrupt increase in the number of people who need humanitarian assistance, and the other is the reduced financial resources available to meet this need. In our opinion, it would be expedient to take a number of measures in order to improve the mechanism of coordination in this extremely important sector of United Nations activities. First, it is necessary to have a special mechanism in order to assess adequately the requirements for humanitarian and special economic assistance; secondly, it seems extremely important to determine the priorities in this field and to concentrate the main resources on those priorities; thirdly, a distinct differentiation between the stages of providing assistance — emergency, rehabilitation and restoration — is required — in our opinion, the question of establishing the potential of early notification and monitoring, including the national capabilities to be involved, deserves more attention; and, fourthly, humanitarian assistance should be used for previously determined purposes in every specific case, rather than being a set of standard services proposed by corresponding international organizations.

The Ukrainian people are making unprecedented efforts to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and are well aware of the significance of emergency situations and the importance of the international community's support in eliminating their after-effects.

Next spring will mark the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, which has not

only had a considerable effect on the fate of the present generation of citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, but also has a global dimension. Chernobyl does not belong only to the past — the problems begotten by the disaster will exist for many years to come, and still more resources and efforts will be needed to overcome them. As the Secretary-General correctly notes in his report on the Chernobyl problem:

> "Chernobyl signifies the reality of a prolonged humanitarian disaster of major proportions. It means having endured nine-and-a-half consecutive years of contamination and contamination risks, of forced displacements and the persistent, albeit necessary, scrutiny of researchers, of conflicting reports and growing scepticism for the guidance of authorities and the ambivalence of the international community." *(A/50/418, para. 1)*

In view of the forthcoming mournful anniversary, the delegation of Ukraine proposes that 26 April 1996 be declared an international day of remembrance of Chernobyl and hopes that this proposal will be supported.

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, which is rightly considered to be the greatest technological and environmental disaster in the history of mankind, has inflicted enormous losses on the social and economic structure of Ukraine. It has provoked serious economic and demographic problems, caused great social and psychological tensions and indirectly influenced the social and political climate in the country.

Response to the Chernobyl disaster outside the former Soviet Union was also considerable. Today we note with regret that the Chernobyl disaster is being more and more often relegated to the background within the Organization. I would like once again to stress from this rostrum that the information accumulated over the years since the disaster convincingly testifies to the need for the utmost attention to be paid to the issue of extending cooperation in mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, both within the United Nations system and at the level of the international community as a whole.

The report of the Secretary-General contains quite complete information about the scale of the humanitarian consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster. I should like to remind the Assembly of the most tragic of these: the territory of Ukraine is today known as the zone of environmental disaster, and the nation's genetic base is threatened.

A total of more than 3.2 million people, including one million children, have been affected by the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine.

The growing morbidity rate among the population in the aftermath of the disaster is of special concern. Ukraine's Ministry of Health has reported a two-fold increase in the morbidity rate, and certain endocrine-system disorders have increased ten- to fifteen-fold. While 47 per cent of adults and 53 per cent of children were found to be healthy in the period from 1987 to 1988, by 1994 those levels had fallen to 28 per cent and 27 per cent respectively.

But most terrible is the effect radiation has on the future of the nation, on its rising generation and, most of all, on its little children.

In the five-year period preceding the Chernobyl disaster, the incidence of thyroid cancer in children in Ukraine was, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), four to five cases per year. However, in 1992 it increased to 47, and in 1994 37 children underwent operations. Thyroid cancer morbidity in children has thus increased eightfold.

In this regard, experts unanimously state that Ukraine is still approaching a period when the incidence of diseases caused by the effect of the Chernobyl disaster will increase sharply. In particular, according to studies by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), an increase is expected in cases of immunological deficiencies, anaemia, neurocirculatory problems, respiratory ailments, diseases of the stomach and intestinal tract, and defects of the cardiovascular system.

According to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, as a result of diseases connected with the consequences of the disaster, about 50,000 people affected have been recognized as disabled, while more than 125,000 have died.

Today Ukraine must allocate a considerable share of its budget to address the consequences of Chernobyl. At the same time, its economic crisis poses serious obstacles to the implementation of the legislative acts it has adopted on problems related to Chernobyl.

According to expert assessments, Ukraine has to spend 20 per cent of its national budget annually on the elimination of all the consequences of the accident. Unfortunately, Ukraine does not have the potential to

cover on its own the substantial expenses required to solve the set of social, economic and environmental problems connected with eliminating the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident.

In this respect, we appreciate the contribution made by the Member States and organizations of the United Nations system in the field of the study, mitigation and minimization of the aftermath of Chernobyl; the activities of regional and other organizations in this field; and the bilateral activities and programmes of non-governmental organizations.

Owing to the United Nations, a number of projects and international cooperation arrangements aimed at minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are currently being implemented in Ukraine.

We are grateful to the World Health Organization, which is actively cooperating with the relevant bodies of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and its Academy of Medical Sciences in the management of the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. We also attach great importance to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chernobyl programme, under the auspices of which three centres have been established in Ukraine for the social and psychological rehabilitation of the people affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

We look forward to the outcome of five projects implemented under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I should like to mention, among these, the work done in connection with evaluating the impact of the "Shelter" facility of the fourth reactor of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on the environment.

Numerous scientific research and technical assistance projects are being conducted in cooperation with the Commission of the European Union, in the framework of the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia (TACIS) programme. Studies are being carried out on the migration of radionuclides through land ecosystems to agricultural products and on the transfer of radioactive substances to water. Decontamination strategies are being developed, and a system for the biological monitoring of radiation levels and of a number of medical problems connected with the treatment of, and preventive inspections for, thyroid cancer in children is being elaborated.

Moreover, a number of projects aimed at minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are being implemented on a bilateral level, with the cooperation of the United States of America, Japan, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the Republic of Korea. Thus, during 1992-1995, Ukraine participated in some 45 international cooperation programmes and projects aimed at mitigating the negative impact of the Chernobyl disaster.

On the whole, the established structure of mechanisms for international cooperation and the coordination of efforts to eliminate the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident accurately reflects the requirements associated with the present stage of activities to minimize the consequences of the disaster. But we note with concern the obvious lack of resources provided by the international community for the solution of the medical, environmental and social problems encountered by those States that were affected by the accident.

I should like also to draw attention to the global aspect of the disaster, as Chernobyl presents a real threat to other countries of the world. There are about 800 interim storage points for radioactive waste, and an open-air cooling pond from which water is seeping into the River Pripyat, within the estrangement zone of the Chernobyl power plant. Large quantities of radionuclides of caesium-137, strontium-90 and plutonium — are concentrated in the flood-lands of this river. All this, combined with the leaching of radioactive substances from the affected areas, poses the threat of the emergence of a critical level of contamination of the main water artery of Ukraine, the River Dnieper and thus also the Black Sea.

It was with a deep understanding of global interdependence in the protection of environmental safety on the European continent that the President of Ukraine took the political decision to close the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, on condition that adequate international financial and material support be provided. This support is necessary to create energy capabilities in Ukraine, in order to compensate for the closure of the plant; to create special storage areas for processed nuclear fuel; to convert "Shelter" facilities to ecologically safe ones; and to solve the problem of social protection for the people working at the Chernobyl plant. We hope that the problem of adequate international support will be resolved during the negotiations on this subject between the Ukrainian authorities and their G-7 counterparts in the near future.

We are convinced also that it is time to intensify efforts to find a practical solution to the range of

problems related to the minimization and elimination of the consequences of the accident. For this reason, we call for strengthening international cooperation within the United Nations framework and for combining the intellectual and material resources of international organizations, scientific and business circles, humanitarian charitable funds and interested individuals, in order to solve the spectrum of medical, social and ecological problems related to the alleviation of the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster; to develop new and effective technologies for the socio-economic rehabilitation of territories affected by nuclear contamination; and to eliminate the threat of the spread of radionuclides beyond the boundaries of the contaminated zones.

Such a comprehensive approach to the solution of the Chernobyl problem would, in our opinion, yield the maximum benefit in enhancing ecological safety in the European region.

In this context, cooperation in the framework of the International Scientific and Technological Centre for Nuclear and Radiological Accidents, established in Ukraine, is a promising channel for collaboration with international organizations and the United Nations specialized agencies with a view to solving the scientific and technical problems of decommissioning the Chernobyl plant, strengthening the potential of the international community to prevent possible nuclear and radiation accidents and minimize the aftermath of the accidents that have occurred, and jointly developing medical and technological projects, using Chernobyl as a unique world laboratory. Considering the global aspect of the Chernobyl problem, we invite all interested States and international organizations to cooperate within the framework of the Centre. Information about the Centre is available in the General Assembly Hall.

We believe that the processes of reforming the socio-economic sector in Ukraine and overcoming the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident would have been less painful for the country's population and would have required less international assistance had Ukraine not suffered considerable economic losses arising from its compliance with the United Nations sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In this connection, we expect that the initiation of the process of lifting the economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will open up broad prospects for establishing peace and stability in the Balkans, and will give impetus to the economic development of the neighbouring States and to the restoration of traditional economic ties in that region.

Ukraine is ready to join in the efforts of other States towards revitalizing the economy that was destroyed and the trade and economic ties that were broken by the war, and to contribute towards the normalization of the life of the population in this region.

Therefore we believe that the issue of economic assistance to the third States which suffered from the enforcement of sanctions should remain on the agenda, especially since the previous resolutions on the issue have not been implemented, at least with respect to Ukraine. Our country has not received any of the assistance which is provided for in these resolutions and which could be directed towards the solution of specific economic problems arising from the implementation of the sanctions that have been imposed. The International Monetary Fund credits mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General were particularly targeted for the solution of internal balance-of-payment problems and could not be used for other purposes, including possible coverage of the losses entailed by the implementation of the sanctions.

Larger-scale enforcement by the international community represented by the Security Council of measures for the exercise of economic compulsion makes it necessary to review the mechanism for the implementation of sanctions as well as to render special economic assistance to the States which suffer therefrom.

We should like to recall as well that the President of Ukraine has put forward a number of proposals in this field which, once implemented, would make it possible to reduce the negative impact upon the economies of neighbouring States of the economic sanctions enforced by the Security Council.

Mr. March (Australia): My delegation addresses its comments today to item 154 and in support of draft resolution A/50/L.23.

Australia continues to support the use of national volunteer schemes such as "White Helmets" when appropriate in humanitarian relief and development operations, and we note that Australia currently supports the Red-R Scheme with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Australia recognizes the voluntary nature of such schemes and we encourage Member States and the relevant United Nations agencies

to do what they can within their means to support the revised initiative. My delegation welcomes the proposal to create a distinct window to this effect and encourages countries in a position to do so to contribute in whatever way they deem appropriate to such a window.

Australia recognizes the effort that has gone into refining the original proposal. My delegation would like to express its continuing support for the "White Helmets" initiative and commends Argentina and other interested States for their dedication to the important cause of improved cooperation and coordination of United Nations humanitarian relief activities.

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union on agenda items 20 and 154.

The magnitude and growing number of complex humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters have caused suffering to millions of persons. The international community has rightly provided much support to the affected countries to assist them in delivering the much-needed humanitarian aid to their people.

The European Union believes that so far the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been provided with the necessary policy guidance and tools required to effectively accomplish the multitude of tasks it is responsible for. Such mechanisms and procedures have been established in the past few years, particularly through resolutions 46/182, 47/168, 48/57 and 49/139 A, as well as through the agreed conclusions of the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1993.

As the report of the Secretary-General points out, there have been profound and dramatic changes in humanitarian assistance in recent years and the "challenge of coordination" has become ever greater. During its three years of existence the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has risen to this challenge and is, in our view, constructively contributing to strengthening the coordination of various humanitarian assistance efforts within the United Nations system. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is also satisfactorily tackling the many problems encountered in emergency situations. There is still a need for urgent measures to give greater stability to the funding of the Department, which has to rely on extrabudgetary funds to finance more than 50 per cent of its activities.

The report of the Secretary-General provides a comprehensive and accurate description of the serious challenges that the whole international community is facing in the field of humanitarian assistance and of the mechanisms and capacities of the United Nations system in this respect. During the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July, we had the opportunity to hold a substantial debate on many of the issues mentioned in this report. We look forward to similar debates at future sessions of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly.

The European Union, however, reiterates its concern regarding the increasing lack of respect for the principles, spirit and rules of international humanitarian law. The principles of neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian assistance must find their indispensable complement in respect by all for humanitarian law. Furthermore, the European Union expresses its deep concern over the growing risks to the safety of all those involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance. There is a need both to improve the legal procedures that might be required to provide effective safety and security to all those involved, including humanitarian personnel, and to put in place, from the onset, practical protection measures when there are obvious risks for relief workers. The European Union welcomes, as a first step in this process, the adoption of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

At this year's substantive session, the Economic and Social Council adopted, on the initiative of the European Union, resolution 1995/56, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations". Noting the differences and the limitations in the capacity of the agencies, organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Council decided to initiate a process for reviewing and strengthening all aspects of the United Nations system's capacity for humanitarian assistance. We are pleased to know that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has already commenced its work and has established an Inter-Agency Task Force to ensure an adequate follow-up. We also look forward to considering this matter within the governing bodies of the programmes and agencies concerned. This process should enable Member States, in the coming years, to adopt such decisions as may be necessary to redress the problems that might be identified.

Once again, in 1994, the European Union, both through Community funds and through contributions of its Member States, was the major contributor to United Nations consolidated humanitarian appeals, providing 50

per cent of all contributions received. The member States of the European Union have also been among the major contributors to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund from its very inception, providing over 60 per cent of its present resources. We also welcome the efforts by non-traditional donors, particularly developing countries, in contributing to the United Nations system's humanitarian relief and, in this context, we appeal to all States to consider making new contributions and thus promoting the establishment of a broader donor base.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/50/418) on the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster clearly portrays the tragic and protracted humanitarian consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe almost 10 years after it occurred. All along, the European Union has been a major participant in international efforts to address the Chernobyl problem, contributing substantial financial assistance. This continued commitment has been reinforced by its participation in the expanded meetings of the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination on Chernobyl, as will be the case at the meeting to be held in the next few days.

The European Union has welcomed the initiative proposed by Argentina to promote the participation of volunteers — "White Helmets" — in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development. The European Union commends the close cooperation established between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations volunteers programme for the purpose of considering this proposal. In this regard, we look forward to the necessary further study, based on any initial experiences, of the requirements for ensuring successful, step-by-step implementation of the "White Helmets" initiative.

The European Union notes with concern the substantial number of draft resolutions containing appeals by countries and regions for special economic assistance. While recognizing that needs exist, we urge Member States to join the ongoing efforts to streamline the decision-making process of the Assembly on this matter, which should gradually lead away from biennialization and clustering towards a shorter and more standardized format for these draft resolutions.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Shreim (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My intervention relates to agenda item 20 (b) regarding assistance to the Palestinian people.

The conclusion by the Palestinian and Israeli parties of the second implementation agreement for the Declaration of Principles, through the signing of the interim agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in Washington on 28 September 1995, has had a great impact on the peace process in the Middle East, moving it forward and giving it an added momentum. Today, as a result of that agreement, we witness the redeployment of Israeli forces from Palestinian cities, towns and villages. This is one of the necessary steps on the road towards ending the occupation.

We hope that the implementation process will continue as planned, in accordance with the agreed schedule, until the holding, on 21 January 1996, of Palestinian elections to the legislative council of the Palestinian National Authority. This important and positive political development will make it possible for the Palestinian Authority to extend its authority to larger areas of the West Bank. Clearly, such progress will have a direct, positive impact at all the economic, social and developmental levels, and on the ability of the Palestinian Authority to deal with the challenging process of rebuilding and modernizing the Palestinian economy and society together with sound planning for development.

As we enter upon a new stage of the peace process, it is our hope that the international community will continue to help us to face up to our new and increasing tasks, so that we may be able to maintain the peace, the achievement of which required a great deal of courage and vision, especially that that peace enfolds many real risks. We, like all the parties concerned, are aware of those risks, challenges and continuing threats to the peace process, yet we remain committed to pursuing the path that has been charted for peace.

If the peace process is to continue and succeed, it is clear that the Palestinian people must experience the tangible benefits of this process, particularly in terms of better conditions and standards of living. There have been many encouraging promises over the past two years to assist the Palestinian people but, unfortunately, many of those promises have not materialized and have remained a dead letter. At this time, while we extend thanks and

appreciation to all the countries and organizations that have provided important, diverse forms of assistance to the Palestinian people, we hope that all the pledges made will be honoured in the near future and will generate real projects that would demonstrate the international community's support for the peace process and its readiness to shoulder its responsibilities with regard to the question of Palestine and to the process of rebuilding Palestine after the long, harsh years of occupation, which resulted in a destroyed infrastructure and an extremely difficult economic, social and environmental situation.

The Palestinian people greatly appreciate all international assistance and recognize its vital importance during this critical period of transition. They also realize the impossibility of building a fully viable and independent economy depending only on international assistance. This assistance is a very important element in moving the Palestinian economy forward. But it is clearly a temporary stimulant that must be tied to gradually increasing efficiency in our ability to build our economic institutions, our taxation and customs systems, to utilize our natural resources in reconstructing our economic infrastructure, and to encourage Palestinian and foreign capital investment in our economy so that we may be able to build an open and strong economy. Such an economy would be an essential cornerstone in the laying of solid foundations for an independent Palestinian State that would become an integral part of a new and stable Middle East, wherein peace, stability, cooperation and complementarity of economies and technologies would prevail.

Today, we continue to face the challenge of the process of rebuilding under very difficult circumstances. In addition to the ravaged infrastructure and a high unemployment rate of more than 50 per cent of the labour force, Israeli practices belonging to the occupation mentality persist. The collective punishment of the Palestinian people is still official Israeli policy. For example, the repeated closure or sealing of the occupied Palestinian territory, with all its destructive and stifling economic effects and other consequences, is a policy that continues to be pursued by the Israeli authorities. This practice has been particularly dangerous with regard to the frequent sealing of Jerusalem, isolating it from other parts of the occupied territory and from the Palestinian people as a whole.

The various difficulties resulting from such policies and practices have a negative impact upon all economic and commercial activities, including import and export activities, making it very complicated to carry out such activities. These Israeli practices are contrary to the agreement reached with the Palestinian party. We would ask the Israeli authorities the point of these practices. They can only frustrate efforts towards peace. We hope that the international community will send a clear message to the Israeli Government that it is in the interests of peace and of the region to end these dangerous policies, which do nothing to enhance security in the region, and which encourage the forces of extremism and undermine the goals of the process of international assistance to the Palestinian people.

Regional cooperation is a goal which we all seek, but it must be the result of the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including the resolution of the final status issues, as provided for in the Declaration of Principles. We believe that this goal should be reached gradually, moving parallel to the political developments achieved and supporting them, not preceding them. At the same time, we must take into consideration the special situation of the Palestinian economy as part of a new entity facing many challenges and difficulties and lacking the competitive capabilities of other larger and better established economies in the region.

It is because of this fact that we believe that any attempt to draw up the parameters of such regional cooperation must take such factors into consideration in order to ensure that all parties will benefit from that cooperation. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in assisting the Palestinian people. On this occasion, we wish to express our appreciation for the thorough report presented by the Secretary-General under this item. We also express our appreciation for the efforts of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, particularly with regard to the establishment of a coordinating mechanism on the ground which has contributed to support for the activities of the United Nations basically carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the occupied Palestinian territories. We express our gratitude for and appreciation of such positive and important contributions to assisting the Palestinian people.

The continuous, timely and honest implementation of the peace agreement and support for this process constitute the optimum solution for confronting the currents of extremism and fanaticism and the enemies of

peace and for ensuring that peace will prevail. If we do not continue steadfastly on the path of peace, such dangers will threaten all that we have achieved so far.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): As previously announced in the *Journal*, the following working groups established by the General Assembly will hold consecutive meetings tomorrow, Tuesday, 28 November, at 10:30 a.m., in Conference Room 2, to elect their officers: the High Level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations; the Ad hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development; and the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.